Ford Urges House Leaders to Seek Release Of All Records on Kennedy Assassination

By George Lardner Jr.
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Former President Gerald R. Ford, the only surviving member of the Warren Commission that investigated the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, has asked House leaders to press for release of all files concerning the assassination.

Ford urged public disclosure of all materials at the CIA as well as the records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations and the relatively few of the Warren Commission papers still under seal.

He made the request in letters sent last week to House Speaker Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) and to Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), who was chairman of the assassinations committee. Stokes has said recently that he favors disclosure of most records still under seal to counter the charges of government involvement in Kennedy's death and a subsequent coverup made in the movie "JFK."

The only restrictions Ford said he would retain are those laid down by the Kennedy family, limiting access to the autopsy photographs and X-ray materials to qualified medical experts. These limitations, he noted, "could, of course, be removed at the request of the Kennedy family."

GERALD R. FORD
... served on Warren Commission

Ford emphasized that he still holds firm to the Warren Commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, was the one who killed Kennedy. According to public opinion polls, most Americans disagree. Ford said he hoped disclosure of the records would "resolve any legitimate doubts of others."

Ford also urged that the National Research Council appoint "a new panel of outstanding scientists" to review the acoustical evidence that led the House committee in 1979 to conclude that a fourth shot had been fired at Kennedy from the grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza and that he was probably killed as the result of a conspiracy.

In his letter, Ford asserted that "all" of the Warren Commission records having "any primary relevance" to the question of who killed Kennedy and whether there was a conspiracy were made available to the public in 1964.

Less than 5 percent of the commission documents remain under seal. But hundreds of thousands of pages of CIA and FBI records are still being withheld.